

they took us back to 1929 and the excitement even then that involved a trip to the Fox.

Next was “March of the Siamese Children” from *The King and I*, a piece well suited to the architecture of the building. Continuing with tunes from Broadway, Richard performed selections from the 1966 Jerry Herman musical, *Mame*. A rumble from 32’ Diaphones opened the medley, which featured shifting time signatures, soaring solo-reed melodies, and acrobatic runs on the solo manual. This took us to intermission.

The interval ended with award presentations to Robert L. Foreman, Jr. and Joe Patten for their work, ensuring future generations will be able to visit this magnificent theatre. Then Richard returned to the organ, with music by Sir Arthur Bliss and the 1936 motion picture, *Things to Come*. At times bold and other times dark and foreboding, it was great fun on this massive instrument.

Next was Rudolf Friml’s “Veil Dance” from the Japanese ballet *O Mitake San*, played in a very orchestral style. This was followed by “The Desert Song” from the 1926 Sigmund Romberg musical of the same name, featuring thrilling full-string combinations and a wide dynamic range. Richard handles this type of music with such ease, one can’t help but sit in complete awe at such fine musicianship.

“Shooting Star” by Sydney Torch was a marvelous novelty number that featured great interplay between manuals, and his final selection, the “March and Procession of Bacchus” from the 1876 ballet, *Sylvia*, was bold and full.

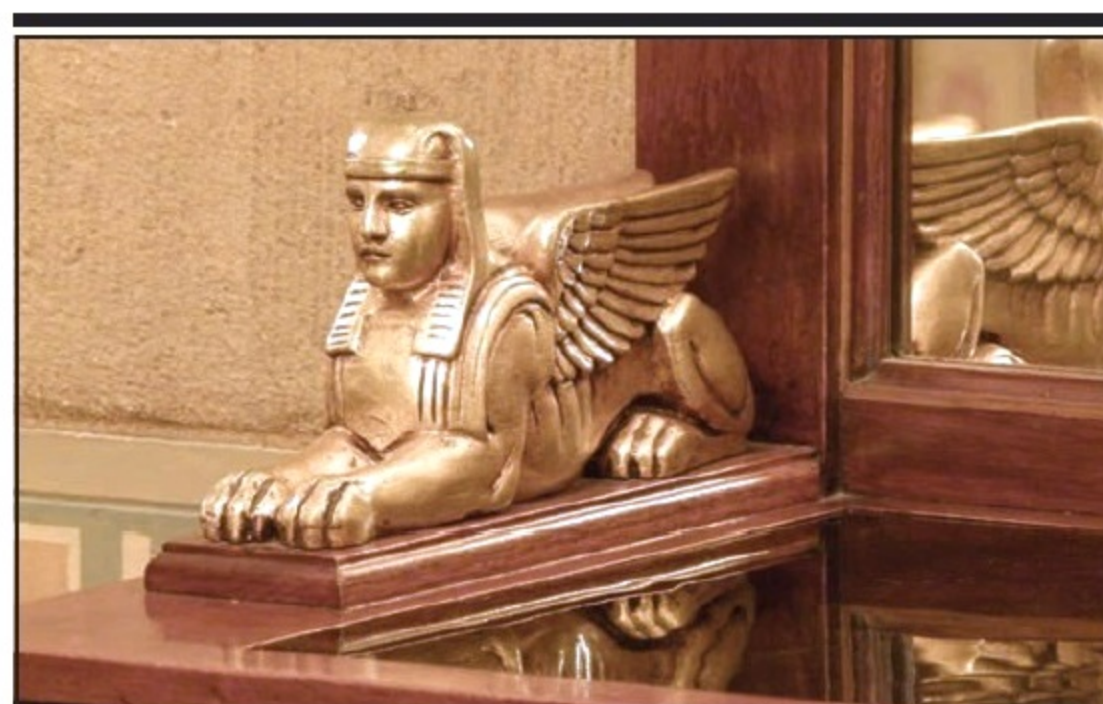
The crowd wasn’t finished with Richard, and demanded an encore. He obliged with an arrangement of “Sweet Georgia Brown” that still has people talking. Beginning as a French Toccata, we were treated to a musical romp that was as much fun visually as it was aurally. Anyone who has had a chance to view his “Tiger Rag” rendition on YouTube knows what kind of fast-paced, jazzed-up, frenetic arrangement Richard can produce. By the time he was finished, several other convention performers had apparently scratched it off their play list. One wag was heard to comment “if you want a best-seller, all you need is a disc full of nothing but Richard Hills’ encores.” It was an unforgettable performance by a stellar artist.

With time between concerts to catch a bite to eat, we took advantage of local recommendations; some of us headed to the Varsity Drive-In, a short walk from the theatre. Hailed as the “largest drive-in” in the world, the 85-year-old landmark can accommodate 600 cars and over 800 people inside the restaurant. The food is greasy, the portions aren’t large, but the price was right and it tasted pretty darn good! We sat amidst Atlanta Braves fans headed for Turner Field, and soon we were headed back to our own entertainment shrine.

Returning to the Fox, our evening event began with a presentation by Scot Huntington, past-president of the Organ Historical Society and member of the Organ Citation Committee. He awarded the “Landmark of American Organbuilding” citation to the Atlanta Fox, for the Möller organ. Accepting were Adina Alford Erwin, Vice President and General Manager of the Fox Theatre, and board member Carolyn Wills. Both these women show such an understanding and passion for the role a theatre organ can fill, we can only hope it could be emulated across the country.

Then we moved on to our entertainment for the evening. Clark Wilson was on tap to accompany the 1929 Buster Keaton film, *Spite Marriage*. This was Keaton’s last silent film, and while it featured more drama than a usual Keaton work, it contained a wealth of sight gags and comedy bits, many of which Keaton used again in his 1943 film, *I Dood It*—some replicated shot for shot.

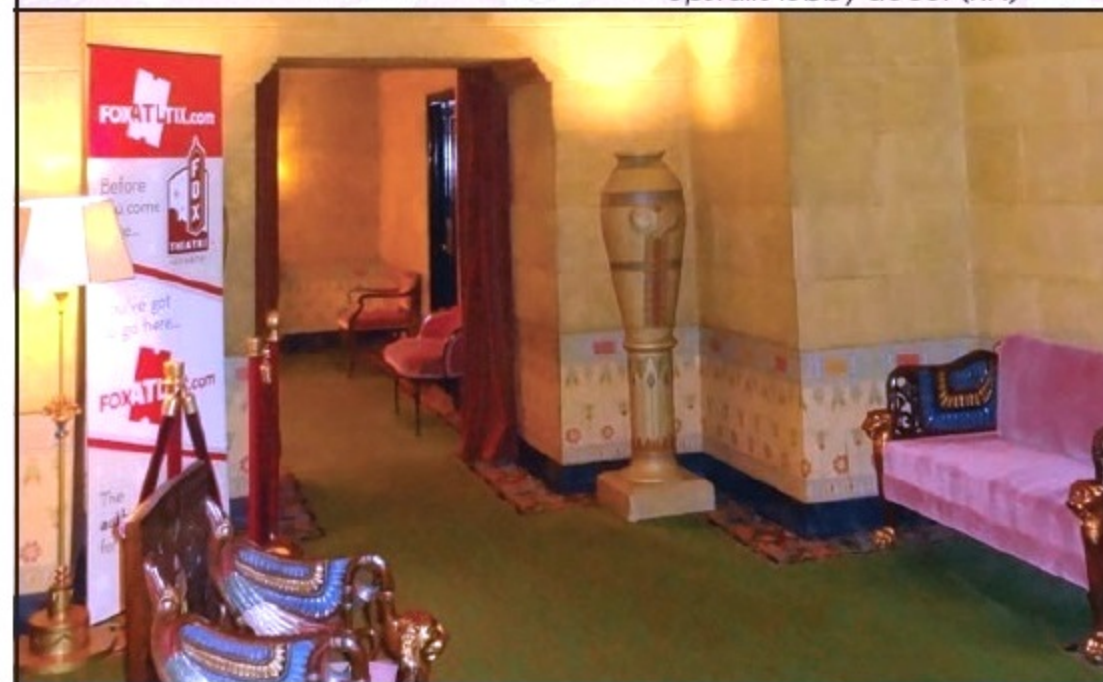
Clark rode the console up for a couple of selections before the movie, and by the time the feature film started, the audience was hushed with anticipation. Clark’s accompaniment was dead-on, with themes that matched the on-screen action and cues that faithfully captured the comedy antics. Playing the part of Elmer, a humble worker in a dry cleaning establishment, Keaton idolizes stage actress Triby Drew (played by Dorothy Sebastian). When Elmer inadvertently ends up in the stage production where Triby stars, hilarity ensues. After a series of events that finds them married, then estranged, then at sea with criminals, the movie ends with both living happily ever after. The film elicited both applause and riotous laughter at times from the audience—a sure sign everyone was enjoying the evening.



Décor at the Fox (PB)



Upstairs lobby décor (RN)



(RN)



The Atlanta chapter welcomes us to Atlanta (JS)